

## Standards for classification and censorship

Films are classified and censored to reflect the level of tolerance indicated by the community standards of the Ontario public. In Ontario there are four designations within the classification system:



**FAMILY:** Films suitable for all.



**PARENTAL GUIDANCE:** Parents are advised that theme or content may be more mature than "family" films. However, children are permitted unsupervised access and the decision of film suitability lies entirely with the parents. Films in this category may contain limited violence, such as hand-to-hand fighting, the use of weapons without excessive bloodletting, restrained portrayal of accident or disaster. They may also contain scenes involving very brief or casual nudity, romantic involvement which is not sexually explicit. Mild use of coarse or vulgar language.



**ADULT ACCOMPANIMENT:** Restricted to 14 and over unless accompanied by an adult. (Suitable for 14 and over). Theme or content may be more mature and in the opinion of the Board not suitable for most children 13 and under. Films in this category may contain limited nudity and sexual involvement. There may also be sexual innuendo, suggestive or vulgar dialogue, coarse allusion and offensive language. There may be a higher degree of violence including bloodletting. Violence and nudity will not be gratuitous but should be integral to the plot.



**RESTRICTED:** Admittance limited to those of 18 years and over. Films may become restricted if they contain scenes of heavy violence, torture, or abuse, extremely graphic depiction of accident or horror, full nudity, sexual activity or undue use of offensive language. Films which promote controversial or antisocial lifestyles might also be restricted depending on format and force of presentation.

**Eliminations:** Each film is judged on its own merits. However, very graphic or prolonged scenes of violence, torture, bloodletting; explicit portrayal of sex/violence eg. rape, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children, explicit portrayal of sexual activity, undue or prolonged emphasis on genitalia and ill-treatment of animals would normally be considered to contravene community standards and are scenes for which eliminations would normally be requested.

**Rejected:** Instances of rejection of an entire film are very rare and would normally occur only where required eliminations were so extensive as to ruin the continuity of the film.

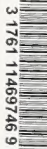
Although language code is generally set aside for Restricted classifications, extremes in dialogue or vocabulary are a concern.

Guidelines are under continual reassessment and review. We invite your recommendations or questions. Please address your correspondence to:

Theatres Branch  
Ministry of Consumer  
and Commercial Relations  
1075 Millwood Road  
Toronto, Ontario M4G 1X6



Ministry of  
Consumer and  
Commercial  
Relations  
Ontario



## FILM CLASSIFICATION AND CENSORSHIP

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CC

- 2018

Some  
questions  
answered



Ministry of  
Consumer and  
Commercial  
Relations  
Ontario

### The Theatres Act

- was enacted in response to public demand for the monitoring of all films intended for public exhibition in Ontario
- gives to a board the mandate to approve films for exhibition in this province.

### The Board

- exercises its mandate by approving films in accordance with community standards.
- by careful classification of films the board ensures that children are protected from premature exposure to material which could be harmful.
- provides information on film content to the theatre-going public.
- on rare occasions requests eliminations in films where content is judged to contravene community standards.
- in extraordinary cases, may reject a film in its entirety.

In exercising its jurisdiction, the Board recognizes the necessity to be representative of the community in its makeup, reflective of the community in its recommendations and openly accountable to the community in its decision-making. To achieve these ends it uses the following techniques:

- Makeup of the Board:** The Board is comprised of members who represent a cross-section of the community in age, philosophy, background, lifestyle and ethnic origin.
- Contact with the community:** Open meetings and community contact with university and high school students, community associations and special interest groups are a priority of the Board and allow an assessment and monitoring of community values and concerns. These are reflected in Board guidelines for screening films.
- Publication of guidelines:** The Board's guidelines, or perception of community standards, are available to the public. They are regularly reviewed and reassessed according to input received from the community.
- Use of standard procedures:** Standard procedures for screening and classification are in use as well as a formal reporting system which details the decisions on each film and the reasons for them.
- Open records:** Information on any decision of the board is available to the public on request. This includes the reasons for any requested eliminations in films.

### Role of the Ontario Board of Censors

Services provided by the Ontario Censor Board include:

- Screening and defining as Family, Parental Guidance, Adult Accompaniment or Restricted all films (including all 35mm, 16mm, 8mm and videotape) intended for public exhibition;
- Providing additional information on films where appropriate, in the form of clarifications or warnings;
- Monitoring all advertising connected with film (other than for radio or television);
- Recommending, where warranted, that eliminations be made in scenes which seriously contravene community standards of tolerance or acceptability. This would include contraventions of the Criminal Code. Very few major films, approximately one in 500, require eliminations. Over two-thirds of the people in the province have indicated by several means their concern that some restraints be exercised against excesses in films in the portrayal of violence or explicit sex. The greatest common concern lies in the scenes involving extremes in violence or sexual exploitation of children.

Many adults rely on information provided by the board when choosing a film they wish to see, or to avoid or when guiding the film choices of their children. The Restricted and Adult Accompaniment classifications protect children, by law, from exposure to films which are deemed inappropriate for, or potentially harmful to, children.

### Procedures for Screening

With the exception of certain art and festival films which may be dealt with by separate procedure, the approval of films is the responsibility of a rotating Board which screens in panels of five to seven people. Each film is reviewed by at least two members, though usually more.

Using Board guidelines, each screening member makes individual notes, beginning with the assumption that a film is Family until some scene or dialogue places it in a more mature category. Scenes which seem to contravene community standards of tolerance are considered in the context of the film and noted.

At a meeting of a quorum of the Board, personal reports from the screening members are tabled and discussed and a decision is made on the film. Any members of the Board may request a screening before supporting or challenging a recommendation. Recommendations on classification, warnings and eliminations must always be a majority decision.

An appeal from a decision of the Board may be made if the person submitting the film requests a written review of that decision or asks to meet with the Board to present his or her case. The appeal will be dealt with by a totally different panel from the original one and its decision will be final.